

Subject: **Gold King Mine Release - Regional Update #10**

Date: **19 August 2015**

### **Background**

The Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado has had a continuous discharge of acidic mine drainage that is a historic contributor of lead, arsenic, zinc, copper, and cadmium into the Cement Creek drainage of the Animas River watershed. On August 5, 2015, an estimated 3 million gallons of mine wastewater released into the upper portions of Cement Creek, and into the Animas River.

### **Executive Summary**

- Water Advisories Lifted: New Mexico announced that drinking water systems and recreational activity along the Animas and San Juan rivers can resume. The City of Durango announced that they had resumed pumping raw water for water drinking water treatment and distribution; and La Plata County announced that the Animas River was open to recreational use. The State of Utah also lifted their advisories for Utah Crop Irrigation and Livestock.
- EPA Region 9 field response continues from the Farmington, NM, Incident Command Post (ICP), and is focused on assessing the impacts of the release along a stretch of the San Juan River extending from Farmington, NM, to Mexican Hat, UT, and into Lake Powell.
- EPA will continue to sample, analyze, and make data available to support local decision makers moving forward to allow them to make the best informed decisions.
- EPA Region 9 continues to provide an alternative water supply and hay to the Navajo Tribal Utility Agency (NTUA) for agriculture and livestock.
- EPA Region 9 continues to coordinate with representatives from the Navajo Nation, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the States of AZ, Utah, NM, and federal agencies Bureau of Redamation, the National Park Service, and US Geological Survey.

### **Current Actions**

- The Lake Powell Branch has been refining plans for the upcoming USGS/NPS 14-day sampling expedition beginning at the end of this week. The EPA will not be integrating its sampling efforts into the USGS/NPS Mercury study, instead EPA is focusing its sampling efforts on San Juan River Gold King Mine related water and sediment quality influences on Lake Powell.
- Utah DWQ anticipates posting both graphs of its data and explanations of this data, Wednesday, August 19th. Utah DWQ data can be accessed at the following URL:  
<http://www.deq.utah.gov/Topics/Water/goldkingmine/index.htm>
- On Monday August 17, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) officials announced it has examined data provided by states upstream of Lake Powell and closer to the Gold King Mine spill. ADEQ's analysis of data released by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality of samples collected about 100 miles from Lake Powell (closest Utah sample) shows that water quality conditions in the San Juan River upstream of Lake Powell are generally consistent with pre-spill conditions. See more at: <https://ein.az.gov/emergency-information/emergency-bulletin/adeq-update-colorado-gold-king-mine-spill>
- Bureau of Reclamation completed sampling yesterday, August 18 at the mouth of the San Juan River and Lake Mead. No data yet from the sampling.
- The Navajo Nation President's office held a meeting with Navajo EPA on Monday 8/17 to discuss neighboring states lifting of water advisories and reportedly evaluating a similar action by Navajo Nation.

The President decided on 8/17 to keep river restrictions in place. He will reconsider daily depending on data and recommendations from Navajo EPA.

- Congressman Rob Bishop (and Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee) visited the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area on 8/17. This trip was scheduled prior to the Gold King Mine incident and it provided an opportunity for the NPS and EPA to provide an update. Senator Feinstein has expressed an interest in obtaining the data and maps of the sampling being done by EPA on Navajo Nation.
- **The Attorney Generals of Utah and Colorado are visiting the Gold King Mine site today (8/19).**
- **On 8/18 EPA released additional water quality data from August 13, 2015, on the San Juan River between Farmington and Shiprock, New Mexico. Data can be found here:**  
<http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/gold-king-mine-data-august-18-2015> Each surface water sample was analyzed for metals including arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury. Due to the highly variable conditions typical of this segment of the river, additional testing will be conducted, and we continue to work closely with the Navajo Nation EPA on assessing drinking water, agriculture, livestock, and other critical water needs.
- R9 continues surface water and sediment sampling and monitoring (pH, conductivity, turbidity) along the San Juan River in the Navajo Nation at 11 monitoring sites.
- BIA and NN have identified 13 locations for tankage for EPA to distribute water for agriculture and livestock use. EPA continues providing over 16,000 gallons of non-potable water per day to each of these locations.
- EPA continues to provide hay/alfalfa bales to Navajo Nation chapter locations for livestock needs.

#### Public meetings and outreach:

- **On 8/18 a special Chapter meeting was held by ATSDR and EPA in Beclabito. The meeting was attended by Beclabito Chapter officials, Council Delegate Amber Crotty, Dine College Professor Perry Charley and 30 community members.**
- **The UAC Durango Public Hotline number is now operating functionally as of 8/19 (1-844-607-9700).**
- **There are no meetings today. On 8/20 (tomorrow) there will be two meetings, one at Oljato as a follow-up meeting and then a Navajo Mountain meeting.**
- **The Area Command will host a big public meeting/Open House in Durango on 8/20.**
- **UAC provided assistance to local residents regarding claims processing related to the response on 8/18.**
- EPA continues coordinating field response efforts with Navajo Nation through an EPA representative in Windowrock, NM
- Comprehensive Community Outreach continues with 5 Region 9 CICs in the Farmington ICP traveling daily to various Navajo Chapter Houses for scheduled meetings with local residents.
- On 8/16 meetings were held at the Mexican Water Chapter (25 in attendance) and the Guudiah Chapter (40 in attendance).
- Region 6, 8, 9 continue to hold joint Regional Response Team calls with State and Federal Agencies for situational updates.

#### Personnel On-Site

##### **5 R9 OSCs**

1 R10 OSC

1 R9 PIO

##### **5 R9 CIC**

2 R9 LNC/LNO

1 R9 Laboratory

8 USCG PST

### **Key Issues**

- Utah has requested historical water quality data from Navajo Nation in the San Juan River